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STATE OF SPIRITS

More people are spending more money on booze
than ever before in Oregon

BY ALEX V. CIPOLLE

DEAR OREGON: You, or rather your drinking habits, are moving up in the world. In last year's edition of Swizzle, *EW* reported that, according to the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC), Oregonians bought Fireball Cinnamon Whiskey more than any other distilled spirit in 2014.

In 2015, we must have collectively suffered a hangover from slurping too much of that sugary booze equivalent of a pumpkin spice latte, because Jack is back. In 2015, in dollar sales, Jack Daniel's Old No. 7 got the top spot at \$14,155,282, knocking Fireball to second place at \$12,073,778.

In volume sales, however, vodka is king with HRD Vodka taking first place with 901,384 liters sold, followed by Fleischmann's Royal Vodka with 733,962 liters.

These numbers fall into what OLCC has stated is a "record-breaking" 2013-2015 biennium, tipping the scales at more than \$1 billion in liquor sales. "This is nearly \$90 million (8 percent) more than the previous biennium (2011-2013)," the OLCC reports. "Approximately 5.8 million cases of distilled spirits were shipped to Oregon liquor stores from OLCC's Milwaukie warehouse during the biennium."

In spite of what this campaign season is driving many of us to do — drink and forget — the OLCC says these numbers don't necessarily reflect that the individual consumer is drinking more. The commission finds that the boom is likelier driven by an improving state economy — allowing for consumers to purchase pricier spirits — as well as an increasing population.

Makes sense considering that in 2015, for the third year in a row, Oregon was the top state to move to.

To witness this swell in Eugene, just head down to the "Barmuda Triangle" downtown — the crossroads of Willamette and Olive where a concentration of watering holes like Luckey's, The Davis, The Horsehead, Jameson's, Starlight Lounge, Sidelines, First National Taphouse and Cowfish all fall within a block radius — on any given Friday or Saturday night: The bars spillover and the sidewalks fill with wobbling folks from all walks of life.

If downtown is your scene, try shaking things up with the



FRIDAY NIGHT IN THE 'BARMUDA TRIANGLE':
FRONT — SCOTT LIVELY (LEFT), MARTIN KELLY,
AARON DUCHATEAU. BACK — BRIAN ESTES,
ELIZABETH FRASER-PAUL, GARRET SEWARD

PHOTO BY ATHENA DELENE

new sci-fi trivia at Starlight Lounge (see story "Trekkie Trivia"). Want to imbibe and play with smaller crowds? Check out Pinball Knights at Blairally Vintage Arcade (see "Pinball Wizards"). For a less-crowded, off-the-beaten track experience, head southeast to Dexter's new Rattlesnake BBQ at the Dexter Lake Club (see "Good to Be Back"). For the anti-scene, which, as one writer discovered, involves drinking with as few people as possible, head to Springfield (see "All Quiet on the Eastern Front"). ■



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THE AUTHOR PONDERES THE
MYSTERIES OF PINBALL

PINBALL WIZARDS

Taking a turn at the flippers during
Blairally's weekly tournament

BY BEN RICKER

Two Turtles releases the spring-loaded plunger, and a small steel ball rockets up the chute and begins its arcing trajectory across the candy-colored table. Wearing a beard and T-shirt that reads "I'm kind of a big deal," Turtles' focus is locked on the dazzling array of lights glowing from a 40-year-old pinball machine called "Wizard!"

Turtles is a regular here, a fixture on Wednesday nights when Blairally hosts Pinball Knights, its weekly double-elimination pinball tournament. And he's destroying me.

Usually a dozen or so contestants buy in. They pay \$5 to add their names to the bracket. Prizes are whatever Pinball Knights organizers can scrape together. In the past, champion 'ballers have taken home Sandwich League sandwiches, bottles of 2 Towns cider or Whiteaker Tattoo Collective vouchers.

Turtles promises to tattoo my first name across his right bicep if he wins the tattoo package.

Despite holding a commanding lead, Turtles generously pretends it's still anyone's game. He keeps the ball alive for what feels like an eternity and, when it's finally slungshot down an "out lane," he steps away from the Wizard! and says: "Everyone knows your first

two balls don't mean shit."

Built in 1975 to coincide with the release of Ken Russell's film *Tommy*, Wizard!'s colorful backglass depicts a defiant Roger Daltrey, wearing black sunglasses and white muscle shirt, cuddling a seminude Ann Margret. Chesty vixens flank Daltrey and Margret; flames engulf the world around them.

Wizard! is one of Blairally's more than 15 electromechanical (EM) pinball machines. EM machines are gorgeous relics from the bygone analog era that ended shortly after video games conquered America's arcades.

Aesthetic charm aside, the beauty of an EM cabinet is that it has no computerized brain, Turtles says, adding: "If a nuclear bomb went off in Eugene, you could start this thing up and play it the next day."

Machines manufactured since the mid-1970s tend to be digital at heart; circuit boards all but retired electromechanical relay systems and the rolling scoring reel gave way to flashy dot matrix displays.

Pinball Knights emcee Clark Davis says no other bar on the west coast owns as many working EM pinball machines as Blairally, located right in the heart of Eugene's Whiteaker neighborhood.

Pinball runs deep in Blairally's genes, says owner Chad Boutin. For two years leading up to its grand opening in

2012, Boutin operated a small speakeasy-arcade out of the warehouse at 245 Blair Blvd. called The Location. Insiders who knew about Boutin's illicit night club brought six packs, crowded around a laptop streaming stolen Blazers games, smoked cigarettes and played pinball till sunrise.

Boutin's pinball love stems mostly from nostalgia. His parents split when he was a kid. The lanky Oregonian remembers visiting his old man on weekends in Coos Bay. Father and son bonded over a Williams-made pinball cabinet called "Black Knight" in the early '80s.

Boutin says he'd love to get his hands on that machine again. "That stupid Black Knight! It's my grail," he howls.

"Defining moments in my life happened around pinball," he adds.

Turtles shares a similar story. He fondly remembers playing Capt. Fantastic with his dad back in '79.

With no concrete understanding of how pinball is scored, I'm dumbfounded to find I've somehow managed to shrink the point-gap between Turtles and me.

But as the tension mounts, I crack under the pressure and freeze for a split second as my third and final ball comes screaming down the center lane. It slips neatly between the stalled flippers and disappears down the drain into the guts of the Wizard!

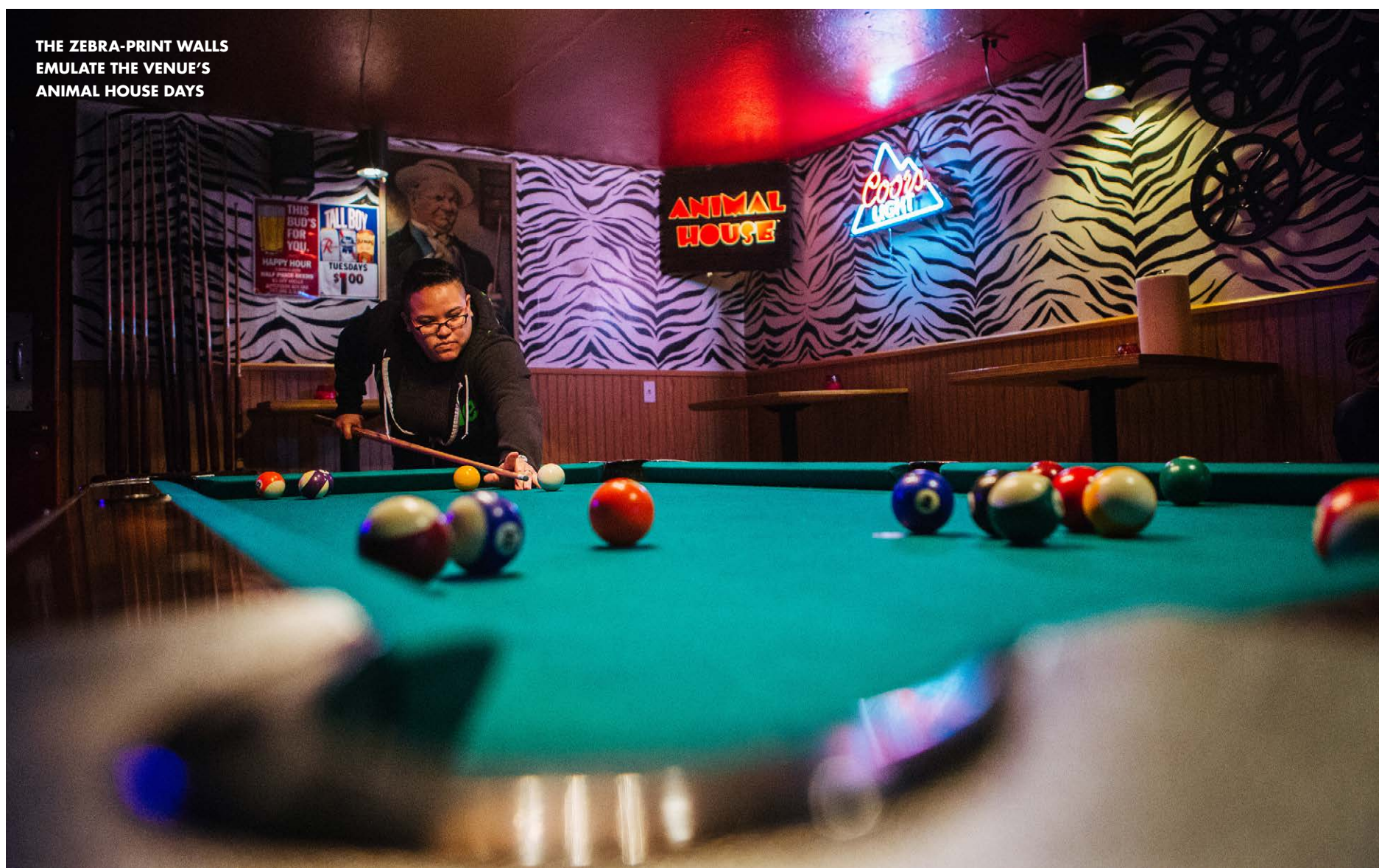
"Everybody knows your third ball doesn't mean shit," Turtles says. ■

Pinball Knights, a weekly pinball tournament, takes place every Wednesday at 8 pm; \$5 buy-in, no minors after 9 pm. More info at the Blairally Vintage Arcade page on Facebook.



PHOTOS BY TRASK BEDORTHA

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PHOTOS BY TODD COOPER

GOOD TO BE BACK

The Dexter Lake Club is still alive and kicking
with the addition of Rattlesnake BBQ BY CAMILLA MORTENSEN

The Dexter Lake Club is iconic. The roadhouse-esque building sitting near the shore of Dexter Reservoir looks about the same as it did in the 1978 film *Animal House* when Otis Day called out to the film audience, “It feels so good to be back here at the Dexter Lake Club.”

It does feel good to be back at the DLC. The movie history has long drawn visitors the 12 or so miles out Hwy. 58 to the DLC, but for locals in the Dexter, Lowell and Pleasant Hill area, it’s also the fact it’s the hometown bar that draws people back each week. And while the building has remained largely the same since the days of John Belushi, the DLC’s ownership and management have switched hands over the years.

Crystal and Dustin Holmes took over the lease last May, Crystal Holmes tells *EW*, and the Rattlesnake BBQ at the Dexter Lake Club is the latest rendition of the restaurant and bar combo.

The Holmes grew up in the area and got married on nearby Rattlesnake Road, Crystal Holmes says, so opening their business in nearby Dexter just made sense.

Park in the gravel lot in front of the DLC and you can

walk into the bar on the right or climb the porch to the restaurant on the left. Hang left into the restaurant and Crystal Holmes takes your order — she says the Northwest brisket is the best-selling item on the menu.

“My husband traveled a lot when he played football through college in his early 20s,” she says, “and everywhere he went he would seek out BBQ places. This led to him developing his own flavor and take on what we call a Northwest-fusion BBQ.”

The Rattlesnake warns that it can take up to 12 hours for the pit master Dustin Holmes’ smoker to produce that “melt in your mouth” quality, and if you miss the first round of tender meat at 11 am, stop back at 5 pm for the next.

“We have traditional weekly specials including Taco Tuesday and Karaoke Thursday,” she says and a customer favorite is the smoked prime rib dinner on Fridays. As meatatarian as the menu sounds, the veggies among us can get a garden burger and a variety of fried snacks like tater tots and jalapeño poppers. The BBQ sauces, like the tasty Couch Hazel, work well for the fries, too.

If you are looking to imbibe more than snack, then walk into the DLC proper. You’ll likely find Dustin Holmes serving drinks behind the bar. The DLC was restored back

to its *Animal House* look by Shannon and Gregg Stewart, the previous couple that ran the roadhouse, complete with the brick stage where Otis Day and the Knights once played “Shama Lama Ding Dong” and zebra print on the walls that are the subject of endless selfies.

The weekends feature live music at the bar like local favorites Peter Giri and Still Thinking. When it comes to the drinks, Crystal Holmes says, “Our house drink menu changes depending on the time of year, but for summer our margaritas and bloody Marys are a big hit.”



THE TEXAS BRISKET

If a bloody Mary “fully loaded” with cocktail onions, asparagus and olives doesn’t grab you, then you can always go for the \$2 Shock Top ale. As the warmer weather comes, sip a cold drink on the patio of a bar so famous that there’s a band in New York City that went to the trouble of copyrighting the name the Dexter Lake Club Band. Steal the name all you like, New York, there’s only one real DLC. ■

The Dexter Lake Club and Rattlesnake BBQ are at 39128 Dexter Road, Dexter; 335-9626 or dexterlakeclub.com.

TREKKIE TRIVIA

Starlight Lounge hosts a wild sci-fi happy hour BY AMY SCHNEIDER

Late-night bar trivia is only fun if you occasionally know an answer or two. Otherwise you end up quietly resenting your teammates for knowing so much about 1980s sports and leisure. Not that I'm speaking from experience.

So when I heard about Star One, Eugene's science fiction and fantasy happy hour at Starlight Lounge downtown, I squeaked with delight. The nature of the event varies month to month, but when I attended in February, trivia maven Dr. Seven Phoenix had taken the helm and was orchestrating a killer game of science fiction-themed trivia.

As someone with moderately nerdy inclinations (think *Star Trek*, *Doctor Who*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*), I immediately realized that sci-fi trivia could be a thing of wonder. And it was.

"My vision for this is the idea of bringing people together," says Starlight Lounge co-owner Julie Anna. "Let's say you're new to town and you love *Firefly*. If you're here, you might meet someone else who enjoys the show, and friendships can start from there."

Anna and Starlight Lounge co-owner Joice Moine are big sci-fi fans, and when they noticed a lack of sci-fi meet-up groups in Eugene, they decided to start their own in late 2015. Anna says previous meetings have included guest speakers and game nights, but trivia has proven the most popular.

I can see why. The packed bar hummed with energy and excitement as trivia moderator Dr. Seven Phoenix announced the first topic: *Star Trek*. I sipped on my hard cider and braced myself for the first question.

For those not familiar with trivia, here's how it usually works: Participants split into teams of varying sizes — you can go solo if you want — and choose a team name. My

fiancé and I christened ourselves "The Beverly Crushers," a witty reference to a *Star Trek* character who ... never mind — let us not venture into unnecessarily geeky terrain.

Moving on: The trivia moderator selects a number of rounds, and each round has a theme and a set number of questions. Once the round is over, a team member brings

the filled-out answer sheet to the moderator, who scores all the sheets between rounds and keeps a tally.

Dr. Seven Phoenix's questions were challenging, and even though I'm a *Star Trek* fan, I can't say I did well.

I knew which character made a come-on to an android (Tasha Yar) and I knew which *Sex and the City* actress had played a character in *Star Trek IV* (Kim Cattrall), but when asked to name the planet on which Worf's father had died, I came up short. Overall, we scored 4/10 for the round.

Round two featured sci-fi and fantasy novels on a sheet of paper, the objective being to identify the author from the book cover and title. My partner and I did much better on this round, gleefully scribbling "Ursula K. Le Guin" and "George Orwell" on the page. We nabbed 7/10 and treated ourselves to free samples of cider from 2 Towns Ciderhouse, which happened to be repping that night.

Round three brought more challenges — we had to name the sci-fi or fantasy TV show theme song after listening to a clip. *Game of Thrones* and *Angel* were a cinch, but *Babylon 5* stumped us.

By this point in the night, we found ourselves seriously out-nerded and trailing behind in seventh place, but there was plenty of cider, so we didn't even care.

I have to say, the level of sci-fi commitment in the room was palpable. I've never been more proud of Eugene, and even though I seriously got my nerdy ass kicked, it was all in the spirit of camaraderie and fun.

"I think it's great how mainstream sci-fi is becoming, as more people are coming out of the geek closet," Anna says.

In continuing with that spirit, Starlight Lounge will host a *Serenity* watch party at 7 pm Friday, March 18, 830 Olive Street in downtown Eugene; 21-plus. It'll be the shiniest sci-fi happy hour yet. ■

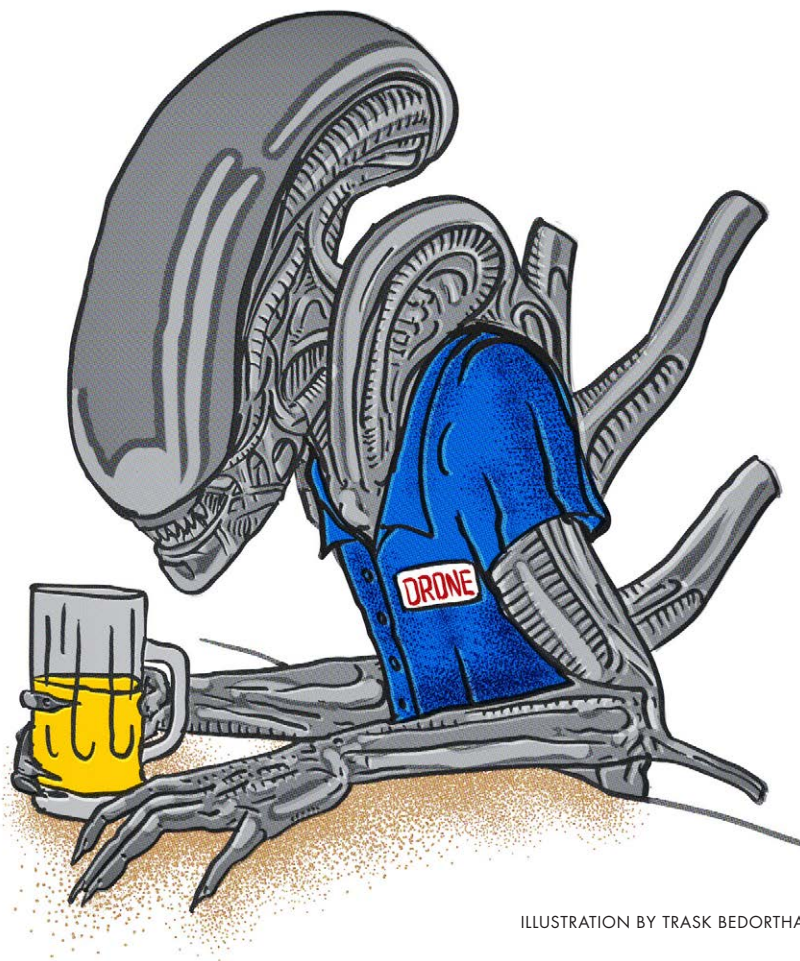


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ALL QUIET ON THE EASTERN FRONT

Groping in the dark for Springfield's slowing pulse

By Ben Ricker

What's up with Springfield?

Rumor has it, Eugene's scrawny, hardscrabble counterpart is fast becoming a nightlife hotspot. But the streets are dark and empty on Saturday night. There's nobody around. I barge in on a "supper club" at Claim 52's The Abbey, where a small flock of clean-cut types gather around a table to sip craft-made half-beers. The folk duo onstage at the Growler Underground almost outnumbers its audience.

It's kinda depressing.

I buy a can of Olympia beer at Bright Oak Meats mostly just to strike up a conversation with the clerk. She tells me there's not much going on in Springfield and that I'd be better off going back to Eugene. When I ask where she'd be if she weren't on the clock, she says, "Home."

Looking for a place to drink my beer, I hear a voice —

You lost?

Where is everyone? I ask.

Dude, the 7-11 on Main and 14th — it's the strangest thing. You gotta check it out. It's its own, like, culture.

But all I find are a couple of convenience store rats sharing a cigarette over a trash can.

Technically speaking, I find people at the titty bars.

Spyce Gentlemen's Club and the Brick House are packed. I'm left with the impression that the only souls enjoying themselves in Springfield are slouched around a pit, throwing cash at naked women who will climb right into your lap if it means another couple bucks.

Zigzagging aimlessly through town, I hear Steve Winwood's voice coming from a shitty boom box somewhere nearby. I follow it to the Willamalane Adult Activity Center, where I find a half-dozen homeless folks resting outside. After dark, the homeless don't necessarily want some weird geek drawing extra attention their way. But I begin to make friends after offering to share my Olympia.

Pee water is what we call that, but it'll do.

They tell me everyone's at the strip clubs.

Springfield's dead. I should know; I went there once. Long live Springfield.

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